Amendments to the Claims:

1. (Withdrawn) A system for monitoring the use of return-shipping labels comprising:

a merchant computer having a label generation application that creates a return-shipping label having a unique return-shipping label identifier and associates the unique return-shipping label identifier with an authorization identifier that has been provided to a customer desiring to return an item; and

a service provider computer having a label access application that allows the customer desiring to return an item having the authorization identifier to access and obtain the return-shipping label, the label access application monitors and records information about the return-shipping label including at least the date and time that the customer desiring to return an item accessed the return-shipping label.

2. (Withdrawn) The system of Claim 1, further comprising:

a commercial carrier computer having a commercial carrier package tracking application that is capable of providing tracking information about a package bearing the return-shipping label having a unique return-shipping label identifier that has been received by a commercial carrier to the label access application.

3. (Withdrawn) The system of Claim 2, wherein the label access application that receives information provided by the commercial carrier package tracking application monitors and records at least the date and time that the package bearing the return-shipping label identifier was received by the commercial carrier.

4. (Withdrawn) The system of Claim 3, wherein the service provider computer further has:

a label reporting application that provides information recorded about a return-

shipping label to a merchant.

5.   (Withdrawn) The system of Claim 4, wherein the label reporting application that provides information recorded about a return-shipping label to a merchant provides information including at least the date and time that the customer desiring to return an item accessed the return-shipping label and at least the date and time that the package bearing the return-shipping label identifier was received by the commercial carrier.

6.   (Withdrawn) The system of Claim 1, wherein the service provider computer further has:

      a label reporting application that provides information recorded about a return-shipping label to a merchant.

7. (Withdrawn)   The system of Claim 6, wherein the label reporting application that provides information recorded about a return-shipping label to a merchant provides information including at least the date and time that the customer desiring to return an item accessed the return-shipping label.

8.   (Withdrawn) A system for providing information about an item being returned to a merchant from a customer, comprising:

a communications device for receiving a return request from a customer;

a merchant returns application for determining whether the return request meets the merchant's business rules;

a merchant computer having a label generation application for creating an electronic pre-paid return-shipping label if the return request meets the merchant's business rules;

a notification device for notifying the customer that the electronic pre-paid return-shipping label is available for the customer's access and use;

a customer computer having a printing device that can be used by the customer to access and print the electronic pre-paid return-shipping label;

a commercial carrier computer having a package tracking application capable of tracking a package bearing the electronic pre-paid return-shipping label once the package has been received by a commercial carrier and recording such tracking information; and

a service provider computer having a label access application that monitors and records the customer's access to the electronic pre-paid return-shipping label and receives and records the tracking information from the commercial carrier package tracking application; and

a label reporting application that provides information recorded about the customer's access to the electronic pre-paid return-shipping label and the tracking information from the commercial carrier package tracking application a to a merchant.

9. (Currently Amended) A method for monitoring the use of a return-shipping label, **the method** comprising **the steps of**:

receiving notification that a customer desires to return an item **to a merchant**;

creating a return-shipping label for the customer's use**, said return-shipping label comprising return-shipping label data**;

making the return-shipping label available for the customer's use;

recording **by a service provider computer** at least a time and date the return-shipping label was made available for the customer's use **and storing at least the time and the date the return-shipping label was made available for the customer's use with the return-shipping label data on the service provider computer**;

making available to the merchant via the service provider computer at least the date and time the return-shipping label was made available for the customer's use;

notifying the customer of the return-shipping label's availability;

receiving **by the service provider computer** a network request to ~~access~~ **retrieve** the return-shipping label, wherein such network request originates with the customer; ~~and~~

recording **by the service provider computer** at least a date and time of the ~~customer's access to the return-shipping label, if accessed by the customer~~ **network request and storing at least the date and the time of the network request with the return-shipping label data; and**

making available to the merchant via the service provider computer the date and time of the network request.

10. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 9, further comprising:

providing the return-shipping label to the customer;

recording **by the service provider computer** at least a time and date the customer was provided the return-shipping label **and storing at least the time and date the customer was provided the return-shipping label with the return-shipping label data**;

receiving at least a time and date that a package bearing the return-shipping label is received by a commercial carrier; and

recording **by the service provider computer** at least the time and date that the package bearing the return-shipping label is received by the commercial carrier **and storing at least the time and the date the package bearing the return-shipping label is received by the commercial carrier with the return-shipping label data**.

11. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 10, further comprising:

making **available to the merchant** ~~the recorded information about at least the date and time the return-shipping label was made available to the customer,~~

~~the date and time of the customer's access to the return-shipping label,~~

at least the date and time the customer obtained the return-shipping label, and

at least the time and date the package bearing the return-shipping label is received by the commercial carrier

~~available to the merchant~~.

12. (Original) The method of Claim 11, wherein the method is used for monitoring the use of a return-shipping label in the shipment of an electronic device.

13.   (Original) The method of Clam 12, wherein the electronic device is one or more chosen from the group consisting of a computer, video projector, television, video recorder, stereo device, audio recorder, video display device, radio receiver, radio transmitter, two-way communication device, cellular telephone, digital telephone, analog telephone, personal digital assistant, printer, facsimile device, copier, paging device, camera, and combinations thereof.

14.   (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 11, wherein ~~the recorded information~~ at least the date and time the return-shipping label was made available to the customer, **at least** the date and time of the customer's ~~access to~~ **network request to retrieve** the return-shipping label, at least the date and time the customer obtained the return-shipping label, and at least the time and date the package bearing the return-shipping label is received by the commercial carrier**, are made** available to the merchant so that the merchant can develop a reasonable estimate of the date the return item will arrive at a location designated by the merchant.

15.   (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 11, further comprising:

receiving **by the service provider computer** at least a time and date the package bearing the return-shipping label is delivered by the commercial carrier;

recording **by a service provider computer** at least the time and date the package bearing the return-shipping label is delivered by the commercial carrier **and storing at least the time and the date the package bearing the return-shipping label is delivered by the commercial carrier**; and

making **available to the merchant via the service provider computer** ~~the recorded information about~~ at least the time and date the package bearing the return-shipping label is delivered by the commercial carrier ~~available to the merchant~~.

16.   (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 15, wherein ~~the recorded information of~~

at least the date and time the return-shipping label was made available to the customer,

at least the date and time of the customer's ~~access to~~ **network request to retrieve** the return-shipping label,

at least the date and time the customer obtained the return-shipping label,

at least the time and date the package bearing the return-shipping label is received by the commercial carrier, and

at least the time and date the package bearing the return-shipping label is delivered by the commercial carrier**,** ~~is~~ **are** made available to the merchant so that the merchant can develop a reasonable estimate of the date the return item arrives at a location designated by the merchant.

17.   (Withdrawn) A method of providing information about the use of a return-shipping label to a merchant, comprising:

receiving a return request from a customer to return an item;

providing a return material authorization to the customer if the request meets a merchant's business rules for a valid return, otherwise refusing the return request;

creating a prepaid return-shipping label for the item;

controlling access to the prepaid return-shipping label;

notifying the customer that the prepaid return-shipping label has been created and is available for the customer's access and electronically transmitting a uniform resource locater hyper-link to the customer, the hyper-link can be used by the customer to access the prepaid return-shipping label upon the entry of the proper return material authorization;

receiving a network request to access to the prepaid return-shipping label;

receiving information from one or more package tracking applications of one or more commercial carriers to about a return item having the return-shipping label, wherein such information includes at least the date and time that the return item having the return-shipping label was received by the commercial carrier; and

providing information to the merchant about the customer's access to the return-shipping label and shipment of the return item.

18.   (Currently Amended) A method comprising:

providing a merchant computer with an application for generating a return-shipping label for use by a customer to return an item purchased from the vendor;

receiving a communication from a customer desiring to return an item purchased from the merchant;

in response to the customer's communication, executing the application with the merchant computer to generate an electronic return-shipping label for transmission to the customer via a network;

executing the application to transmit data necessary for shipping the item to a designated return location from the merchant computer to a service provider computer via a network;

generating a return-shipping label for returning an item at the service provider computer, **said return-shipping label comprising return-shipping label data**;

transmitting a notification of availability of the return-shipping label for download to a customer via a network, the notification having a network resource identifier to identify a network location for downloading the electronic return-shipping label;

recording **by the service provider computer** at least a date and time that the notification was made to the customer ~~in a database associated with the service provider computer~~ **and storing at least the date and the time that the notification was made to the customer with the return-shipping label data**; and

making **available to the merchant computer over the network via the service provider computer** at least ~~a~~ **the** date and time that the notification was made to the customer ~~available to the merchant computer over the network~~.

19.   (Original) A method as claimed in claim 18, wherein the notification is an email notification provided to an email address of the customer, which e-mail address has been provided from the merchant computer to the service provider computer in the data necessary for shipping the item.

20.   (Original)   A method as claimed in claim 18 wherein the data necessary for shipping the item includes a return location address.

21.   (Withdrawn) A method, comprising:

provided a service provider computer capable of receiving a request to access a return-shipping label having a unique package tracking identifier that is linked with a return material authorization issued by a merchant;

receiving the request to access the return shipping label, wherein such request comes from a customer and includes at least the return material authorization;

making at least the date and time the request is received available to the merchant that issued the return material authorization.

22.   (Withdrawn) A method, comprising:

receiving of a communication from a customer to return an item purchased by the customer;

providing a return material authorization to the customer;

creating a return-shipping label that has a unique package tracking identifier that is associated with the return material authorization;

making access to the return-shipping label available to the customer having the return material authorization; and

receiving information about the customer's access to the return-shipping label, wherein such information includes whether the customer has or has not accessed the return shipping label and if the customer has accessed the return shipping label, at least the date and time that such access occurred.